

140

SECRET

MEMORANDUM

To: The Secretary
From: William F. Elliott
Subject: Cuba

In previous memoranda I have ventured to suggest the imposition of a blockade at the earliest moment that we had concrete evidence of Russian importation of arms and personnel to Cuba.

I am aware of the considerations that probably motivated the handling of the matter in the way it was subsequently handled. The impact of the President's speech was electrifying and very reassuring. There was no question that he had the necessary support from this country and, oddly enough, from some people from whom we might not have expected it, such as the Canadians, including, as far as one could see, all important segments of Canadian opinion, in spite of Cyrus Eaton's influence which is growing there.

Unfortunately, he rapidly lost the support, if he ever had it, of those people who always think that talk is better than action, and that the sole object of negotiations is to avoid any risks rather than doing what his speech indicated - taking risks to avoid the supreme risk.

The New York Times of last Sunday was almost devoted to what I suspect was, as usual, a British line since the Times is generally so oriented: I refer to what I would venture to call the proposed Turkish sellout - one of the most dangerous gambits in Khrushchev's game of chess. This was fortunately very well handled by the Administration.

Mr. Friendly in the Washington Post was pontifical but firmly in the way that one should remember in terms of the Italian proverb - "God protect us from our friends - we can take care of our enemies ourselves". He wound up in his interesting last paragraph or two on the note of "by all means concede enough to take Khrushchev off the hook and avoid putting him in an embarrassing or dangerous position in Russia". This and other stock Lippmann themes appeared to be very much in the wings among those who have always felt that the kind of forthright confrontation that the President made was the dangerous and that a series of "concessions" would not do us any good. Otherwise, one is at a loss to know what they mean by "concede". When they say "at all costs keep talking". "There is a time for all things, says the Bible".

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CNO/ASR

REVIEWED BY HG/John DATE 6/12/64

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SECRET

The Secretary - #

October 31, 1962

I would like to put in a guarded way a few observations which I think do not need to be spelled out:

1. The first is that to depend solely on the United Nations for dealing with Castro and for verifying the removal of Soviet missile bases would be bad enough even if we had insisted, as we did not in the exchanges made public, on keeping this inspection on indefinitely as long as there was a Russian in Cuba or a Russian ship touching there. Otherwise, the well known capabilities for hiding warheads and nuclear missiles in a territory as vast as Cuba remain open and can hardly be expected not to be utilized by an enemy who has practiced deception with the most incredible and open regularity. The latest instance is, of course, a sufficient witness.

2. To give an unqualified (or to allow Khrushchev to interpret as unqualified) assurance that we will not "attack" or "invade" Cuba without making it clear that we will always resort to measures of self defense against anyone who violates the agreements for the withdrawal of any form of long range capabilities employing nuclear weapons, including submarine bases, would appear to be capable of dangerous abuse by its possibilities of erecting a safe haven from which Cuba may exercise whatever forms of aggression are not capable of being dealt with through U. N. action. These forms would include direct action as the sabotage of large facilities in Venezuela and the less recent "directed plot" to overturn that Government, which I would have called a direct aggression.

It would seem to me necessary to make absolutely certain that this is a clear policy of this Government and the pontifical advice of Mr. Murray Marder in this Morning's Post that "by opting for tension-reduction, Washington can help set the route for Moscow" will be rejected in favor of not permitting "this tone" to lose the entire substance of what the President had won by his speech and immediate action programs, carefully limited to deal with the immediate realities of the situation.

3. A crucial test of what we intend to do in the future that will not let the whole tone of whether we slide back or move forward in dealing with Castro was, of course, the refusal to argue about giving up the missiles. But an even more crucial positive test will be the continuation of the overflights and all other necessary intelligence procedures to determine what is actually being done behind the present dangerous wall I think, not permissible cloak of delay and secrecy which Castro is erecting.

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The Standard

I am aware that the atmosphere is charged with all sorts of potentialities. On the evidence the greatest potential danger is that we shall continue to repeat the errors of not facing this type of tactics by continued pressure and willingness to act. Whenever we have shown this willingness to act on sound grounds not vital to the basic survival of the Soviet system, we have never failed to get both the backing of the people of the United States and its allies and the backdown of Moscow confronted with action - not words. The greatest danger that exists today that could lead really to war or to our surrender is the danger that Khrushchev may come to believe that we will not under any circumstances really risk war if he gives us a plausible way to substitute words for action and thus permit him to finesse a retention of his gains or a sizeable improvement of his position on the chessboard.

Addressed to you from me simply as a citizen of the United States, I should not have had to classify these remarks. If my making them to you as a Consultant is embarrassing, I should be glad to resume my freedom as a citizen. This country never needed unity more. I felt with the President's really wonderful speech that we were well on the road to achieving not only that unity but a sense of moral security and fortitude which must always be its base. The President's face was an inspiring promise of the kind of leadership which he has shown himself capable of giving this nation. I pray that we will not lose this advantage through any efforts to please those people whose past advice ought to be weighed in terms of its results.

William Y. Elliott

cc: Mr. George McInnes

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/C.C./MR

Secret

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Cuba

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Mr. Friendly in the Washington Post was pontifical but friendly in the way that one should remember in terms of the Italian proverb - "God protect us from our friends - we can take care of our enemies ourselves". He wound up in his interesting last paragraph or two on the note of "by all means concede enough to take Khrushchev off the hook and avoid putting us in an embarrassing or dangerous position in Russia". This and other such Lippmann themes appeared to be very much in the wings among those who have always felt that the kind of forthright confrontation that the President made was too dangerous and that a series of "concessions" would not do us very much harm. Otherwise, one is at a loss to know what they mean by "negotiations", when they say "at all costs keep talking". "There is a time for all things, says the Bible".

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The Secretary - 2

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It would seem to me necessary to make absolutely certain that this is a clear policy of this Government and the presidential advice of Mr. Henry Kissinger in this Morning's Post that "by opening for tension-reduction, Washington can help set the route for Moscow" will be rejected in favor of not permitting "this tone" to lose the entire substance of what the President had won by his speech and immediate action programs, carefully limited to deal with the immediate realities of the situation.

3. A crucial test of what we intend to do in the future that will set the whole tone of whether we slide back or move forward in dealing with Castro was, of course, the refusal to argue about giving up the base. But an even more crucial positive test will be the continuation of the blockade and the overflights and all other necessary intelligence procedures to determine what is actually being done behind the present dangerous and, I think, not permissible cloak of delay and secrecy which Castro is erecting.

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The Secretary - 3

4. Unless this country responds to Mr. Khrushchev's bland assumption that he has now secured a complete guarantee of Castro immunity from any use of armed forces necessary for our self defense, and so avoid a continued delay and deception that takes the entire force out of the President's position, we shall be confronted with Mr. Castro's professing that no one can tell him what to do when he doesn't want to do it and that Moscow's pledges were not binding on him. In that case, I should think the United States might do and either that the United Nations enforce the agreement on Castro or take action in its own self defense to do so if the United Nations is in default. To hold Moscow responsible for Castro's acts has attractions but dangerous ambiguities.

I am aware that the atmosphere is charged with all sorts of potentialities. On the evidence the greatest potential danger is that we shall continue to repeat the errors of not facing this type of tactics by continued pressure and willingness to act. Whenever we have shown the willingness to act on sound grounds not vital to the basic survival of the Soviet system, we have never failed to get both the backing of the people of the United States and its allies and the backdown of Moscow confronted with action - not words. The greatest danger that exists today that could lead really to war or to our surrender is the danger that Khrushchev may come to believe that we will not under any circumstances really risk war if he gives us a plausible way to substitute words for action and thus permit him to finesse a retention of his gains or a sizeable improvement of his position on the chessboard.

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W. Y. Elliott

cc: Mr. George McGhee

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